



chinmaya

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Issue 16: Focus on Youth

The purpose of Chinmaya Yuva Kendra is to give 'root and wings' to the youth – roots of their culture and wings to soar high in the vast expanse of beauty, joy and service. Swami Tejomayananda



Editorial

Our newspapers scream at us daily: climate change threatens our existence; wars are spiralling out of control. The language of today's world is one of 'conflict'. We are bombarded with it every day. And we bombard the world with it too. And so the cycle continues unabated – a self-perpetuating spiral where conflict feeds on conflict.

But if we were to stop and really analyse the root of the problems we see in the world, would we not see that these conflicts come down to us as individuals alone? For aren't the climate changes only the results of the lifestyle choices that we have made as individuals? Aren't the wars ravaging various parts of the world, at their core, a problem of individuals' inability to accept the values of other people? And when we see conflict in our homes, in our workplaces, can we really point fingers at politicians, nations or the world at large? When we really stop to think, we realise that the conflict around us is nothing but a reflection of the conflict within ourselves.

This has been the declaration of Vedanta, the ancient Indian philosophy, for centuries. It declares "Change yourself and the world around will change!" And that is the step that the Chinmaya Yuva Kendra (CHYK), the youth wing of the Chinmaya Mission, has taken. CHYKs undertake a huge variety of activities, from weekly study classes and annual retreats to service (seva) programmes and musical and cultural celebrations – each geared towards helping us bring excellence into our social, material and spiritual lives. CHYKs come together to serve, enjoy, learn and transform – to live life to the full in its truest sense!

And for most, this all started with taking just one small step. Whether it was coming along to a study class, or listening to the talks of our Acharyas (teachers) or even simply

being dragged to an event, each one of us will say that becoming a CHYK has been life-transforming – an education in the true sense! And the message has been spreading like wildfire: whether it is young professionals seeking more to life than money and recognition or youths drawn by a desire to understand more about themselves and their place in the world, CHYK is being received in all quarters of the UK with incredible enthusiasm.

In this issue, we have tried to provide a sense of what CHYK is about, to convey its vision and dynamism, to demonstrate its value for young people today and to give a sense of the life-long friendships that it generates. But to do this justice by words alone is impossible! CHYK transforms lives in a way that is difficult to convey. So if you think you might be interested, please come and experience it for yourselves!

This issue is not just relevant for the young in body, but for all those who are young at heart, who wish to see a change in the world, and are willing to start with themselves. Because youth is about having the daring to change, that is what is required for a really promising future. The great personalities in the history of the world teach us this. Mandela. Gandhi. Mother Teresa. These are personalities that truly stand out. They are like beacons, magnets. The revolutions they began started with a process of transformation within themselves.

CHYK helps us realise this: that each day that we walk out into the world, we have much to achieve and the power to achieve it is all our own. We find that our energy is transformed into dynamism, our imagination into creativity. Tomorrow, what we do today will be called history. Swami Tejomayananda says, "There must be a special stamp, a signature of the person you are." We must remould ourselves, and the world, in the image that we want. Are you ready?

Hari Om!

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This issue has been sponsored in memory of Induben and Pranalalbai Sheth, whose philosophy was: 'The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them.' (George Bernard Shaw)

Roots and wings: taking charge of your life

Swami
Tejomayananda

Chinmaya Yuva Kendra ('CHYK') is the youth wing of the Chinmaya Mission, an international spiritual movement. But is spirituality really relevant for young people? And even if it is, what can CHYK really offer the youth? With his characteristic clarity, Swami Tejomayananda, affectionately known as 'Guruji' within the Mission, explains the real purpose of CHYK.



Let us begin with a very simple question. When you join a medical college what do you expect to become? A doctor of course! When you join an engineering college you will become an engineer. When you join any service organisation, such as the Rotary Club or Lions Club, you know what you will do. But when you join CHYK, what are you supposed to become? If you do not understand this, your very purpose will be defeated.

FULFILLING A NEED

First, one must be clear on what CHYK is not. It is not a youth club. Not just a meeting ground for young people, a fun group or an event management group. That is not the purpose of CHYK.

We must understand that generally when we take up any activity, it is because some need is fulfilled or some interest catered for. When a person picks up a newspaper, he first looks at what interests him. If one is a businessman, one will look at the business

"When the younger generation comes to feel inspired by a programme of revival, it gathers momentum and floods the heart of that generation with a new spirit of courage and goodwill"

Swami
Chinmayananda

pages. A sports enthusiast will go to the sports section. Our need and interest will determine what we read.

Therefore, only if the need is felt and interest fuelled, can the activity be successful. For this reason, it is important for the youth to understand the need which CHYK fulfils. A kind of direct motivation, which we have when we decide to go to university or to the movies or to a sports club, should also be there in CHYK.

TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE

The motto of CHYK is 'Harnessing Youth Potential through Dynamic Spirituality'. Generally people don't think spirituality can be dynamic; they think spirituality is meant for old people, that it means hiding oneself in Himalayan caves. This is not correct.

Let us begin with the basic things. All of us are born in this world whether we like it or not. All of us have to live our lives. Someone else cannot live our lives for us. Your parents may be very loving, but if

"Religion, like the science of nutrition or health, can serve only those who live up to the Laws and not those who know the Laws. Very few are found to have the evolutionary urge, the progressive vision, the daring dynamism, the inner heroism to rise above and live the Laws. Those who did have exploded into an ampler world of mightier fulfilment and joy. Would you?"

Swami Chinmayananda

you are hungry, you alone have to eat; for an examination you alone have to study; your physical pain you alone have to endure. Hence the responsibility of your life is in your hands. But generally, we are ready only to take up some responsibility, and when things go wrong, we readily blame others. If you do not bat well, you say that the pitch was bad. How is it that the other person made a century on the same pitch? You have to start by taking full responsibility for your actions.

CULTIVATING VALUES AND IDEALS

The next question is: what kind of life do you want to lead – what do you want out of your life. There are certain people who have lived in such a way that the mere mention of their name evokes great reverence – these are people of character, of values. The vast majority however may have ideals, but will not know how to live up to them or will set them so low that they mean little. One must ask oneself: do I want to become a person with values or only with valuables?

You may choose your own field of work and shine in it. But there must be a special stamp, a signature of the person you are. Remember one thing – you may be applauded for your achievements or your possessions, but you will be respected only for what you are. There is a big difference between what one has and what one is. CHYK gives you the vision of what you want to become. It is said, 'If you don't stand for something, you will fall for everything'.

Once you inculcate this character, these values, they will manifest through whichever field you choose. You don't become a complete person just by wearing a branded suit or sporting a flower. You need something more for that.

BRINGING OUT YOUR POTENTIAL

Why is a person a great success sometimes and a miserable failure at others? After all, he is the same per-

son. Why is a team a brilliant success at times and an utter disaster on the next occasion? The only reason is that we do not perform to our full potential. We have infinite potential; we just have not harnessed it so far. Therefore we do not shine at the individual level, nor at the collective level. Our potential at the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels has to be brought out. And we must learn to work with others without making an issue of differences – alone we may be good, but we must also shine in togetherness.

Our full potential can manifest only when we have a goal. The higher the goal, the more your abilities

will be displayed. A deer was

grazing in a forest when a lion started chasing him. When the

deer outran the lion, on being taunted

by his friend, the lion replied, 'I was

only running for my food, the deer was

running for his life!' The deer's inspiration

was higher! If you study only to pass, you

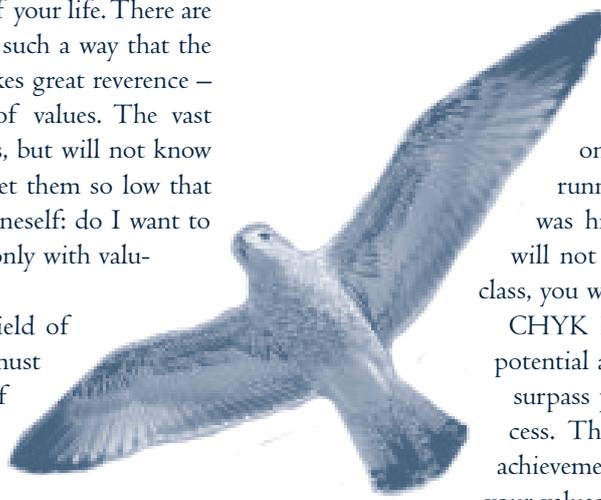
will not do your best. If you wish to top the

class, you will surpass yourself.

CHYK helps you understand your own true potential and set yourself goals to enable you to surpass yourself. That is how you achieve success. Then you may be applauded for your achievements and at the same time respected for your values. This is how one becomes a complete person. You bless yourself and your life becomes a blessing to others. Such a person is called a true CHYK.

BEGINNING THE PROCESS

When you join CHYK therefore, join with the goal of becoming a complete person in the true sense. Then you will excel. Spirituality is not just for old people. Spirituality is the spirit that inspires, that makes life dynamic. The purpose of CHYK is to empower the youth with the right vision of life and the practical means to achieve it – to give you the tools to carve out the life you want. By taking charge of our lives in this way, we can come to understand and live what it truly means to be CHYK!



Dynamic Spirituality

THE HISTORY OF A TRANSFORMING MOVEMENT

It was in December 1951 in Pune, India that the great Saint, Swami Chinmayananda, delivered his first public address on Vedanta, the ancient Indian philosophy. It was from these beginnings that the dynamic worldwide 'Chinmaya Movement' was born, aimed at spreading the man-making knowledge of Vedanta to all corners of the world.

From the time of that first address, every moment of Swami Chinmayananda's life was dedicated to revitalising the study of the ancient Vedic texts. A faith grown old and decayed by centuries of blind belief and habitual commitment to rituals was rekindled. Centres were established across the globe. Schools, hospitals and clinics were built. Thousands of books and letters were written. Through the untiring work of his growing team of disciples, the work of the Mission expanded rapidly.

Within just two decades, Chinmaya Mission had become a household name – synonymous with dynamic spirituality. It was at this time that Swami Chinmayananda felt that the time was ripe for starting a youth wing. His hope was for "young people of perfection, beauty and excellence in every field of work, as it is a highly competitive world that we will enter in the 21st century".

His vision for the youth was: 'Spirituality in Action'

YOUTH POWER

Youths have always been the basis of any great movement, whether it was a revolutionary

"Dynamism is generated when we discover for ourselves a goal and dedicate ourselves to it with reverence and love"

Swami Chinmayananda

one or an evolutionary one. Youths represent the qualities of energy, dynamism and courage. And history is full of examples of occasions when the youth of the world actively expressed what they stood for. Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi was a young woman who shook the entire British Empire during the first war of independence in 1857. Bhagat Singh repeated the feat in 1931 as he smilingly wore the noose around his neck at the young age of 24. Adi Shankaracharya had hoisted the flag of Sanatana Dharma in all directions, completing his mission when he was only 32. Swami Vivekananda was only 38 when he roared the message of Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Time and again, the youth have pioneered great achievements. All that was needed was the right advice, a noble cause to serve and the right channel to express the vast amount of

energy within them. Swami Chinmayananda recognized this. On a visit to a college in Kerala, seeing that many windows in the college were broken, he said, with a wide smile, "I am pleased. This shows that the youth here have energy. My only job is to channel it". And so, at a time when the potential of the youth was widely disregarded, Swami Chinmayananda knew that the sky could be the limit provided the youth were taught how to fly properly. He wanted "at least a hundred inspired, purposeful, sincere, dedicated youngsters,



"This lamp is generally used in South Indian Temples and ancient houses as a lantern to carry when going into darkness. This is light in transit. Generally this is lit at the main lamp and the individual carries this light with him when he goes out. En route, it has less chance of dying away if a sufficiently broad and thick wick is used. Against sudden gushes of wind the flame is to be protected by a guarding palm. This lamp has as its middle a wide container to carry oil, and the spoon on the chain is to feed the wick with oil from time to time.

Nahin gnanena sadrisham pavitramiha vidyate means

there is nothing more purifying than Knowledge.

Let this lamp be our emblem for the Yuva Kendra.

Let each one of you be a lamp lit at the main light at His altar, and may each one of you have enough faith and devotion, born out of your study and knowledge, to feed from time to time the mind that lights up the path with its incandescence. You are all torchbearers for the world, spreading the light of the eternal scriptures that you yourselves have studied and practised. This is the significance of this emblem."

SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

turned brilliant both in their secular fields as well as in their spiritual understanding of the culture of India, and thereafter it shall be the duty of these youngsters to bring this knowledge to the others".

It was out of this powerful vision that the beginnings of the Chinmaya Yuva Kendra came into being.

THE VISION OF CHYK

In 1975, Swami Chinmayananda formed a small youth forum in Bangalore. He introduced texts dedicated for the youth. His intention was to make CHYK the hallmark of an ideal youth movement, solid in its foundation and lofty in its ideals. He ensured from its very inception that the youth made use of CHYK as a platform for self-development, spiritual progress and discovery of their latent talents.

The first spiritual and cultural orientation camps for the youth followed. Through fora, classes and camps burgeoning all over India, Swami Chinmayananda exhorted young people to not only read, understand and reflect upon the scriptures, but also bring them into day-to-day expression. CHYK became a meeting place for young minds with an urge to know more about the purpose of life – it became for the youth a training centre for life. Very rapidly, CHYK-inspired service projects multiplied, spearheaded by those who had begun to see the process of self-transformation in their own hearts. Emphasising this, Swami Chinmayananda said,

"Never before has the world needed such dynamism as today... Your future job is to uplift the country, revitalize and make it a nation. This cannot be done by mere material knowledge or mere secular ideology. It needs in the leaders this explosive expression, personal magnetism and this dynamism cultivated through proper education. Study of the scriptures should never be given up – that is the secret fuel that must fire up our enthusiasm, and inspire us to sacrifice and service".

THE GROWTH OF CHYK WORLDWIDE

From the moment it was formed, there was no looking back. In a short span of about a year, CHYK had established centres in nearly 10 cities in India. Then, from this small group of inspired youths grew an international youth organisation

spanning over a hundred centres around the world.

Not only did it grow in size, but its activities expanded into every conceivable sphere of work – spiritual, social, cultural, educational and service-oriented. Today, weekly CHYK classes are held all over the world. Discussion groups, camps and lectures in universities, workshops, youth fora, debates and national youth conventions are held every year with the guidance of Chinmaya Mission Acharyas. Literally thousands of service projects have been pursued with relentless energy, from large-scale and high-profile fundraisers, to village upliftment programmes, medical treatment camps, disaster relief initiatives and education projects. National quizzes and competitions, drama and musical productions, books and audio-visual productions have been organised aimed at awakening a global cultural revival.

In every outward expression of service, each youth comes to learn more about himself and grow into ampler fields of happiness. And, in turn, his or her outer expressions come to be divinised by the touch of spirituality. It becomes a self-perpetuating cycle, strengthening and reinforcing our own growth. This is the essence of CHYK.

In every opportunity that Gurudev got to interact with the youth, he unrelentingly reminded them: "Mighty plans of action can be undertaken only by equally mighty men. A man is mighty according to the amount of energy and concentration and tranquility of mind he can bring into his undertaking with confidence in himself and faith in the goal he has chosen to reach... To live a large life each youth must have a rich store of personal courage. Fortified with your identification with Him, you shall become fit for success even in the most formidable of enterprises. You can ... You must!"

Today, as Gurudev's children, the young members of CHYK form the most active and dynamic arm of Chinmaya Mission. In their hands, one can see a confident present, an assuring future and the continuation of an everlasting heritage of spiritual strength. And thus, over the years, in their infinite enthusiasm, limitless energy, and dynamic spirituality, CHYK has come to stand as nothing less than a personification of Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's own eternal youthfulness.

Compiled from the book, 'Crescendo Peaks', and other sources

An International Age

CHYK Across the World

"Reinforced with Vedanta when man's mind and intellect become integrated, such an inner personality is the noted soldier in the material world and in the spiritual arena, invincible and reigning ever on the top"

Swami Chinmayananda

To any youth reading this who is contemplating spending any length of time travelling around the world, I would suggest packing three things: a passport, a toothbrush and one simple mantra.

The mantra is so powerful that it does not need to be spoken out loud but hold its four words in your heart and you will not merely be protected, you will be embraced with love and showered with hospitality wherever you go, from Boston to Bangalore, Singapore to Sikkim.

What is this secret mantra? What are these magical four words?

"I am a CHYK."

CHYK did not begin as a seed in any one country, for a seed planted in one place must grow to a mature tree before its pollen can catch the westerly wind and find fertile soil. This takes many years to happen. But in just 30 years, CHYK has blossomed into a forest that traverses the globe . . .

From All India CHYK to centres in Bahrain and the Middle East; from there crossing the Sahara Desert via Nairobi and onto Paris and London and then across the Atlantic, to the United States of CHYK West . . . from there passing over the Pacific rim to the sunny shores of CHYK Australia until arriving back in India via the islands of the Philippines, Hong Kong and Singapore: make no mistake, CHYK is a trans-national forest whose seeds were planted by

Gurudev in his 50 years of roaming the earth, no country large enough to hold Him for long and in whose soft shade we all learn, serve and grow together as One Global CHYK Family.

After the recent International CHYK Camp held in Coimbatore in December 2006 and conducted by Swami Swaroopananda, it was this fact, that we are all members of the same family, that we have all firmly come away with.

But why should CHYK be described as a family?

A family is a group of people who are united through love and share a unifying connection with one another. They protect and care for each other and share a common goal and vision. These are the attributes that unite us as a global CHYK family, made visible by the fact that no matter where in the world you go, you instantly feel at home when you are in the company of a fellow CHYK.

And now the time has come for this international bond to be galvanised and fortified through a regular exchange of ideas. The bridges of love that exist between CHYK centres across the world must now be supplemented with bridges of dialogue, co-operation and mutual assistance.

The benefits of this are many. As we learn of initiatives across the world, we become inspired, both because of the work that is being carried out in spreading the knowledge of Vedanta in other lands but also because we can replicate their



ideas in our own countries, sharing our resources and pooling our talents.

For example, in 2006, CHYK Australia organised a production entitled 'Ramayana in the Park', involving two performances of the great epic at a public park in Melbourne to a combined audience of over 5,000 people that took a team of 50 amateurs and professionals 18 months to conceive and actualise. In the same year, CHYK Chennai performed their production of the 'Kamba Ramayana' at an international festival in Bali, where they were selected to represent India by their national embassy. These are just two of the larger events that occurred in 2006. Think if we knew of all the camps, workshops and initiatives being carried out by CHYKs across the world.

In India, as much emphasis is put on 'adventure activities' as it is on study classes. When I asked Swami Mitrananda about this, saying that surely study classes were the backbone of CHYK, he replied that, 'Knowledge must be the backbone' and that spiritual knowledge can take many forms. One can often learn more from transcending one's fear through a bungee jump (as Swamiji made all 55 cast-members of the Kamba Ramayana do in Bali) than through studying a scrip-



ture. It is not that one technique is more important than the other, but that in different locales, emphasis is placed upon different avenues of knowledge expansion, depending upon the environment in question.

Knowledge of these different techniques helps to expand our minds and allows us to grow and evolve in new and unexpected ways. Having seen first-hand the 'character-building' activities of the Global CHYK Camp and the fearless attitude of the All India CHYKs, many CHYKs in the UK and Australia now see the personality-shaping role of CHYK in a whole new light. Likewise, workshops such as 'The Power of One' in London and 'Make it Happen' in Singapore have inspired CHYKs in Mumbai.

It is vital for CHYK centres across the world to come together over the coming years and transform their bridges of friendship into information superhighways across which our ideas, our insights and of course our love can touch and transform the lives of CHYKs the world over.

This is the call to CHYKs across the globe for the latter part of this decade: the ushering in of a truly international age.

Milan Samani

Awakening Indians to India



21 years ago, Swami Chinmayananda casually mentioned to a group of youths that Indians were not proud of their country and that this lack of pride stemmed from a lack of awareness. 'To know India, is to love India' he said.

One of the youths present that day would later be ordained as Swami Mitrananda and 17 years later, in 2003, he set about fulfilling Gurudev's vision to 'Awaken Indians to India'.

While the current press is full of stories of India's explosion into the global arena, just 4 years ago the lack of national pride in India's youth was tangible – they would scoff at talk of India becoming a global superpower and the Indian 'brain-drain' was at its peak.

Swami Mitrananda's remedy was simple:

- Collate 500 facts about India celebrating its rich and wondrous heritage and bright and promising future.
- Assemble these facts into a 500-page book entitled, 'Awakening Indians to India'. The book would be divided into sections such as Science, History, People and Culture and include facts such as Pythagoras' theorem being discovered in India by Boudhayana, hundreds of years before Pythagoras was born.
- Distribute the book via a national competition, where registrants would pay 25 rupees (30 pence) for a copy of the book and entry to a quiz on its contents.

The initiative surpassed all expectations. Quizzes occurred on local, regional, state and finally national levels and the event is recorded in the Guinness Book of Records as having the largest participation of any quiz ever: some 200,000 registered participants in all. The national-level final was broadcast in a 13-part series on Zee TV and the event was advertised and endorsed by celebrities including actress Kajol, industrialist KM Birla (the youngest billionaire in the world), India's president APJ Kalam and of course our very own Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda.

Just five years on, the tide in India has turned. Indian students who a short while ago scoffed at the thought of India becoming a superpower now announce it proudly, and the same Indian professionals who flocked to America and Europe for work now wish to stay and build their country from within.

Was 'Awakening Indians to India' responsible for this shift in thinking? Probably not. But if 200,000 people registered for the quiz, then over 1,000,000 people must have heard the publicity talks and launch events across the country. If you include the television audience, this number increases many times over.

To influence even one mind is noble work but to give national pride and self-respect to millions of people is a truly incredible accomplishment and the realisation of a vision 17 years in the making.

"Let the actions, words, behaviour, even the demeanour of the CHYKs declare that you are a class apart – brilliant in your aspirations, clean in your thoughts, unapproachable by the baser instincts and pulls of social living"
Swami Chinmayananda

Most youngsters I know and have grown up with are quite content with living life from each day to the next – “working hard and playing hard” – without giving too much thought to short term or even long term goals. Life is lived at such a fast pace that there is no time to even stop and inquire into why certain choices have been made to think or act in a particular way.

CHYKs also work hard but the difference is that the hard work is purposeful and no matter what task is at hand, ‘*sadhana*’ (spiritual discipline) remains the most important work. That’s why CHYK is so refreshing. Ee “play hard” too, but we see the social aspect of CHYK as ‘*satsanga*’ (keeping the company of the good and true). The result? Creativity, energy and dynamism to be our best. And the best in us is what we offer as ‘*seva*’ (selfless service).

This section shows how ‘*sadhana*’, ‘*satsanga*’ and ‘*seva*’ come together so beautifully in the activities offered by CHYK UK.

CHYK Classes

CHYK UK now has 6 classes a week, not to mention classes which CHYKs facilitate in Universities such as LSE, Imperial College and Kings College. In each class, texts are read through and discussed, with the entire group participating and sharing thoughts. CHYK class is much more than just an extra-curricular activity. Each class is an inspiring, uplifting and thought-provoking experience which remains with the attendees all week.

Summaries of classes are prepared each week to enable attendees to reflect on the concepts discussed. These can be found on our website at www.chinmayauk.org. One of the classes has also undertaken the exercise of writing a ‘Sadhana Journal’ – a shared journal recording the experiences of each attendee in

undertaking a spiritual practice, or ‘*sadhana*’, every week – like a continuous internal audit. At least one new CHYK class is introduced every year, and one exciting prospect at the moment is to start a new class for Young Professionals working in the City. More information will soon be available at www.chinmayauk.org so do visit the website regularly.

The attendees of the CHYK classes also meet at regular workshops held at Chinmaya Kirti, the Chinmaya Mission's ashram in London. The three workshops which have taken place in the last year – “Breaking Borders”, “The Power of One” and “Enjoying the Journey” – have inspired creativity in many a CHYK. A series of CHYK workshops will be held this summer and more information will follow by email and through web updates.

CHYK Camps

Every year CHYK UK organises a long-weekend retreat, or ‘CHYK Camp’, for the youth, conducted by a Chinmaya Mission Swami. The main attraction at the camp is the series of discourses given by our Swamis throughout the long weekend. These are interspersed with various activities such as discussion groups, walking meditation, yoga, t’ai chi, presentations, role-plays, cultural entertainment evenings, workshops, educational games, bhajans and chanting, barbeques, picnics, camp fires, and so much more. Camp offers a fantastic opportunity to bond with like-minded young people in a spiritually conducive atmosphere in the company of learned Acharyas (teachers) – always an unforgettable experience! Last year CHYK UK organised an Easter camp in France together with Chinmaya Mission France. It was a great success and marked the launch of CHYK in France. This year’s Easter camp “Right Here Right Now” taking place in France again from 6 to 9 April



2007, sold out within a few weeks of it being advertised.

CHYK Conferences

In September 2006, CHYK UK organised its first ever, all-day youth conference, hosted by Kings College London – “Success Inc.”, which attracted over 200 students and young professionals. The delegates participated in interactive sessions with Swamiji, discussion groups, activities and a Q&A session. The feedback from attendees was excellent, with many people wanting more regular events of this kind to take place.

And that’s exactly what’s in the pipeline! In September 2007, Swamini Vimalananda will be visiting the UK and one of the events on her itinerary will be a youth conference, which we are expecting over 300 people to attend. Add your details to our mailing list to receive more information about the conference and future events of its kind.

CHYK Social Events

Meeting at least once a week at CHYK class, working together to organise events, and generally sharing similar goals and ideals mean it is inevitable that strong bonds of friendship are formed between CHYKs. Each event organised by the CHYKs, be it a camp, conference or seva project, includes a definite element of fun and camaraderie. Many brainstorming sessions for CHYK events have taken place over a pizza after CHYK class. Other CHYK social events include an annual group booking of tickets at a Garba during Navratri. We also try to organise group bookings for plays and concerts every once in a while. On a personal note, the CHYKs are more than just friends, we’re family.

CHYK Seva (Selfless Service)

Many people call the CHYKs the “army” of Chinmaya Mission, ever ready to serve others and live up to the Mission motto of spreading “maximum happiness to the maximum number for the maximum time.” Most of the sevaks (volunteers) who teach children in the Mission’s ‘Bal Vihar’ and teenagers in ‘Junior CHYK’ classes are CHYKs who devote many hours each week to planning for lessons. One CHYK who really stands out as a role-model is Darpan Patel who has combined his enthusiasm as a teacher with his love for music to start ‘CHYK Soul’ music classes for children and teenagers at Chinmaya Kirti. The children have now found a platform from which to express their creativity and skill, and it’s not rare to see CHYK Soul performing at a Chinmaya Mission event.

Other CHYKs have come forward to help with fundraising and 22 April 2007 will mark the 3rd London Marathon in a row that the CHYKs have run for, on behalf of Chinmaya Mission UK. This year it will be Dr. Neha Tanna and Dr. Deepak

Kansagra running the Marathon and we are sure that the time and devotion that they have put into preparing for the run will not go unnoticed or unrewarded. In November 2006, the CHYKs undertook a Bone Marrow Register Drive in association with the Anthony Nolan Trust. The idea came from Pranai Buddhdev, a medical student and long-time CHYK, and it was such a success that over 60 new people registered to be on the bone marrow donor list. Other areas where the CHYKs regularly offer seva are event-organising, website maintenance, Swaranjali (music group) co-ordination, managing audio-visual requirements and doing DIY work at Chinmaya Kirti, to name a few. When the inspiration from our Gurus has no limits, how can the seva have any limits?

CHYK Outreach

One of the reasons why CHYK UK has continued to grow from strength to strength is the fantastic outreach work that takes place all year round. With the inspiration and guidance provided by Brahmacharini Sumati Chaitanya, the resident Acharya in the UK, the CHYKs have organised talks at some of the best educational institutes in the UK, including LSE, UCL, Kings College, Imperial College and Queen Mary. Brni Sumatiji has also spoken at events organised by the National Hindu Students Forum (NHSF) and Hindu Youth UK (HYUK). CHYKs Dr. Milen Shah and Sanjive Sachdev are regularly invited to perform pujas, explain the meaning behind Hindu festivals and conduct talks on Seva (selfless service).

Following an exceptionally successful presentation on the fundamentals of Hinduism conducted by CHYK at UBS, hosted by the UBS Hindu Network and City Hindus Network, new and exciting outreach talks are now also being planned in the corporate sector for young professionals. We’d love to hear your ideas and suggestions, no matter what field you’re in, so please get in touch ...

Trishna Gulrajan

Visit www.chinmayauk.org to view CHYK class summaries and read more about past, current and forthcoming events.

More information from:

Milan Samani:

07957 568 879

Anoli Rayvadera:

07956 636 525

Nikhil Tanna:

07782 362 279

To be added to the mailing list, please email [chyk](mailto:chyk@chinmayauk.org)

@chinmayauk.org



“Chinmaya



Below are extracts from an interview with Swami Chinmayananda in 1980. Swamiji's hard-hitting words will echo deeply with many young readers searching for rational and scientific answers to the complex issues we face today. They show that Vedanta does not break down at the level of politics, conflict or materialism – that, in fact, it does not break down at any level. It is this universality of Vedanta that makes it so appealing in our quest to understand both the world and the individual, the macro and the micro. It is this same universal quality of Vedanta that makes this ancient science of life as necessary and relevant for the youth today as it has been for thousands of years. To find out more, or to read the full interview, please visit our website on www.chinmayauk.org or email chyk@chinmayauk.org.

Why do you give so much importance to the Bhagavad Geeta? Aren't other religious texts of equal importance?

Every religious textbook is of equal importance. But I have no authority to recommend books I have not studied myself. I studied the Geeta – and it was of great help to me – and, therefore, I recommend it to everyone. The methodology followed by the Geeta is conducive to the modern, scientific mind and the educated classes. For they want everything to be rationally proved, intellectually defensible. And the approach of the Geeta is very rational because Krishna had to address a dynamic, young, intelligent man who was a born sceptic. Arjuna did not understand that Krishna was an intellectual giant. Krishna had to make him believe it by the strength of logic. This approach appeals to people like you and I. It converted me from an atheist into a believer ...

You were an atheist?!

Of course. Any intelligent, rational man is an atheist until, of course, he is initiated into religion. So when you criticise religious people at times, I sympathise because I was also like that. I also thought that religion meant ritualism. I never knew there was a science to it, that ritualism was just a bark, the outer bark of the great tree that shelters the whole community. The bark is necessary for the tree. But the bark is not the tree.

You are often exhorting young people to search for a new ideal that would give them motivation for dynamic action. Where do you think such an ideal lies?

(Laughing loudly) An ideal I can never give you. You have to find an ideal. Uncompromisingly you have to

live up to it under any circumstances. Then the best in you starts coming out. Look at Mahatma Gandhi. So long as he was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, he was an ordinary man. But with the ideal of freedom for 400 million people, out of him came such a brilliance that he has carved out a permanent niche in world history. One ideal, and the whole world changes. It was the same with Vivekananda. And with Buddha.

Do you believe that straight political ideals, no moral or spiritual strings attached, can also help to transform the condition of our society?

Any ideals can - not just political ideals, artistic ones too: the belief that I can be the greatest artist - the best in you then starts coming out.

Surely, an ideal is not enough. Without a moral stand, mankind is taken backwards. We see this with political and religious wars today.

It is not the ideal that puts man back. It is the interpretation. Religion is not the cause for wars or the disaster we see today. It is religion interpreted in a particular way. Take the harijan problem in India. Caste is a universal principle. The problem is not in Hinduism, it is the man-made interpretation of Hinduism – and you suffer for it. Take democracy: government of the people, for the people, by the people. But by the time you practise it in a parliament it becomes government on the people and the people suffer. So, even the best things when man-handled become the worst of things.

There is a tension today between different ideologies in the world and a

Thunders ””

growing concern that some countries should not have nuclear weapons because of the ideologies they hold.

This is not new. It was the same in the Mahabharata war. Arjuna with his spiritual ideology refused to fight his cousins. Krishna's answer: "Don't be a fool. You are fighting, not your cousins, but against an ideology." Fighting as such is neither moral nor immoral. It becomes so depending on what ideology you are espousing. This is also just the symptom. The disease is deep down in the human mind itself. It has been polluted. The moral atmosphere is choking today – it has been brought about by man's craze for material acquisition, the craze for power. As our rishis rightly said, material acquisition may give you pleasure but not happiness.

How do you judge an act? Galileo was persecuted in his time. Scientists, messiahs, poets and philosophers have been killed at some points of history and worshipped at others for saying almost the same things.

Your attention is on the act. Focus on the individual. Take Rama walking away from the palace. The public said: 'Remain!'. A modern politician would have said: 'The country wants me: so I will stay.' But Rama said instead: 'Even though it is unjust, a promise was given.' And he walked out. The readiness to sacrifice the security of the present, to live up to the ideals you have set for yourself – that is a noble act.

Many people believe that there is a vast hiatus today between the worlds of religion and everyday reality – this explains why young people are moving away from spirituality and seeking their answers in the tough, materialistic world where survival itself is the most challenging battle.

You see only with one eye. You see only people moving away from religion and striving to find their values in materialism. You don't see the other stream – all those striving for and seeking spirituality. It's not just one-way traffic.

Can modern science and religion coexist intelligently?

(Laughing), You are talking in the language of the 19th century. A century back, this question was valid. It no longer is. Physics and metaphysics have merged today.

Isn't it true that the only religion of our time that has any respectability is religion in action? Not Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism or Islam. We need those who work for social causes, for Love. Most of us would have no interest in Mother Teresa, the Catholic nun, but every one of us deeply respects Mother Teresa, the social worker.

Perfect! But also remember that without Mother Teresa the nun you would never have had Mother Teresa the social worker. It is religion that is behind everything that she did.

But, still, why this vast gap between the search for spiritual values and the quest for materialistic reordering of society based on principles of justice and equality? And isn't every religious person searching for self-realisation as self-centred as a materialistic person?

First, tell me what is religion – then you'll understand. Materialism you know – it is purely selfish: my happiness is all important, my wife and children must be happy. In Hinduism, the greatness of you lies not in what you possess but in what you did with what you possessed. In the modern materialistic world, what you possess is the criterion of your glory. What you do with it – nobody questions.

Understand, Self-realisation is not a piece of cake that the seeker wants to get. He is trying to expand his consciousness. He wants to embrace the whole universe. Not with his hands. Not with power. Not with money. But with understanding. It's a new dimension of consciousness he is attempting: to reach the higher echelons of consciousness in himself. Only then can we know true freedom. That is religion or spiritualism. In fact, religion is the technology by which these spiritual ideals can be reached.

From an interview with Swami Chinmayananda, 1980

Although CHYK will mean something very individual and particular for each CHYK, they will all agree that it offers the potential for tremendous personal upliftment, deep friendship and greater self-awareness. We asked some of our youths what it means to them to be CHYK. Here are their reflections:

CHYKCHAT

“The art of spiritual living is subtler than all other arts, more demanding than all known sciences, more precise than literature, more adventurous than space-walking”
Swami Chinmayananda

Devayani Khakhria, Designer

CHYK generates a confidence and an optimism that is born out of the special knowledge of Vedanta. CHYK is a special energy, a wavelength of understanding in the heart that you share something of infinite value, and which ignites your inspiration upon contact.

CHYK is about self-discovery through the study of Vedanta. By coming together to learn about the scriptures in a way that relates to our lives, we create a live forum for intellectual discussion and stimulation, which makes us examine our own lives, and redefine our life goals and achievements.

There is a loving guidance that is extended to CHYKs by their teachers and this is Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's legacy to us. Gurudev used to say, "CHYKs who don't study Vedanta are not CHYKs", so in the end, CHYK is a responsibility, but one that is joyfully undertaken for the benefit of one's own growth. And in striving to understand and to share the knowledge with others, a self-renewing circuit of exchange is created.

It is a win-win scenario, where you never stop learning ... And in the process, true friendships grow along with you. Through healthy decisions made in the company of those with integrity and honesty, a CHYK learns to fulfil his or



her own potential to the maximum and build for him or herself a happy life. In the same way that playing a sport against great players makes you raise your game, being a CHYK has helped me raise my standard.

I love being a CHYK ..."

Milan Samani, Chartered Accountant

"A CHYK is a seeker. He or she is one who, at some level, feels that there is something more to life than the mundane. It is as if, perched atop a rock, he looks out towards the horizon and sees two paths before him. The first leads down into the Valley, the other, to the summit of the Mountain. The Way of the Valley, the low road, is the one easy to tread, worn by many and demarcated by the temptations of everyday life. But a CHYK is a seeker and a seeker flinches at the Way of the Valley. He looks down and sees the masses, the pleasantries and maladies, the conformity and the humdrum, and though he is drawn to them, something within him resists.

So he looks up. To the Path of the Mountain.

But the Way of the Mountain is shrouded in mist. And this is not a bad thing; for the Way of the Mountain is fraught with difficulty. He knows others have walked this path before. He sees them from time to time and revels in their radiance. He reads and listens to their words; contemplates and understands their meaning; but still he is unsure. And all the while, the laughter and tears of those from the Valley below echo up and tempt him.

So there he remains, perched atop his rock, moving neither up nor down. But then, he hears a noise. He looks across and his eyes connect with another CHYK, seated on a rock near his own. No words are spoken; none is required for they are drawn



together by an unknown force. Their feet move lightly towards each other over the rocky ground. As though choreographed by some absent administrator, they break their gaze and turn their heads towards the summit of the Mountain. And with the firmest of conviction, with fire in their hearts, they step hand-in-hand into the Mist."

Nishal Hurry,
IT Project Manager

"I remember being drawn to CHYK because of the rich and deep conversations generated with like-minded people. CHYK is a unique forum, a refreshing oasis compared to the usual rat race crowd focussed on ambition, achievement and money. CHYKs click with each other because they have a genuine regard. They are not interested in what work you do, or what car you drive. The essence is that we have all come together because we have similar questions, seeking ultimately the Truth.

To be honest, CHYK filled a hole for me – or to put it better, created a space for me to think about life. It allowed me to ask questions such as, "Why are we here?" and "What is our purpose in life?" I remember my first study class where I was asked what I thought God was... I felt very nervous revealing thoughts that

had never previously been shared, let alone with a group of complete strangers! It was very comforting to know that my answer (which I thought zany at the time) was accepted as very close to Vedantic philosophy. I was amazed at this revelation, and felt a real 'connection' and a desire to know more. That is the beauty of CHYK – it helps to know you are not alone, others too are seeking the same things. And you gain clarity in your thinking. I have found many solutions to problems as a direct result of the teachings, in fact you find problems dissolve in class and do not require a solution.

Finally, there is another side which I have left till the end. CHYKs that you meet will be your friends forever – this is because the bond of friendship is based upon selflessness. Actually CHYK is a great way to learn this valuable virtue. I have met the most amazing people through



CHYK, and still continue to do so. Horizons keep expanding, there is no end to the talent that we have – CHYK is a working example of Man's own inner potential – it gives you a chance to show the world what you have got. I have witnessed so many people grow (very rapidly) when lit with the torch of knowledge.

I end by saying that I am very grateful for meeting the path of CHYK, my life has definitely changed, and is continually changing in the right direction."

Darpan Patel,
Management Accountant

"I love music. Having been a CHYK for almost 9 years, I find it increasingly easy to talk about the value-based principles our Masters have demonstrated and passed down to us over many millennia. But this time, I'll use the language of music in order to try to convey what CHYK means to me.

Music is, in its simplest form, sound and silence. That's the beauty of it for me as a spiritual aspirant (and an aspiring artist). We all hear the silence as well as the sound, knowingly or unknowingly. But are we listening to it? Life should be the same as music in this respect. For me, becoming conscious of this silence feels almost like a new voyage of dis-

covery when you truly start to listen, experience and become more aware of yourself. And so my journey of rediscovery is to experience the soundless sound, the rhythm within, the harmony in the unity of this infinite creation and its unending melody of expression.

This is my understanding of music and of spirituality, and this understanding has unfolded in me whilst being a CHYK because of Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's life-transforming teachings, the Master's grace. Now I find myself walking the path of spirituality as that aspiring artist and seeker of the Truth. I feel more rooted in life and in who I am, be it as a musician or otherwise. For if I can understand one thing through and through, I can understand everything. So music ensures (and



demands) that I find some sense of peace on my life's journey, whilst heading towards the final destination, the Infinite. However, as many wise men have said time after time, the true seeker finds the destination in the journey itself. Vedanta has helped me to understand this and CHYK helps me to live it each day in, I hope, the Master's Way."

CHINMAYA MISSION UK STUDY CLASSES AND ACTIVITIES

ADULT STUDY (AGE 30 +)

Adult study groups are held on every day of the week by Brni Sumati Chaitanya and experienced sevaks. A systematic study scheme is followed, providing attendees with an opportunity to learn Vedanta and discover practical tools to bring the ideas into expression in daily life. Classes are held for all levels of advancement and in various locations in London including Hendon, Harrow, Northwood, St John's Wood, South Croydon, Ilford, West Wickham and Southsea Portsmouth.

Study of a wide range of texts and subjects is undertaken, including Self Unfoldment, Art of Manmaking, Bhaja Govindam, Kindle Life, Atma Bodha, Vivekachudamani and Tattva Bodhah. These classes are free and all are welcome to attend. For more information contact Rameshbhai Pattani on 07765 837 134.

VANPRASTHA SANSTHAN (SENIOR CITIZENS' GROUP) (AGE 55 +)

The first ever Chinmaya Vanprastha Sansthan, or Senior Citizens Group, outside India has been commenced in the UK. The motto of the Vanprastha Sansthan is 'Graceful Ageing through Spiritual Living'. Regular classes are held fortnightly on Wednesdays and a wide range of workshops and other programmes are held. For further information please contact: Mannu Bhalla: 07946 581 929, Lal Nawbatt: 020 8954 6490 or Bharat Kiri: 07766 705 393.

CHYK (YOUTH) STUDY CLASSES (17-30 yrs)

CHYK classes for the youth are conducted in Baker Street and Hendon for beginners, intermediates and advanced levels. The classes are aimed at building a clarity of vision and sharpness of intellect. Talks by our Acharya, Brni Sumatiji, and our experienced young speakers are held at universities around the country. These classes and talks are open to all and all youth are strongly encouraged to attend. For more information contact Milan Samani: 07957 568 879 or on chyk@chinmayauk.org

BALVIHAR (CHILDREN'S) CLASSES (4-12 yrs)

Swami Chinmayananda has said, "Children are not vessels to be filled, but lamps to be lit". At our Balvihar centres in Hendon, Northwood, St John's Wood, Harrow, Edgware and Wanstead, children are given value-based education, learning the fundamental and enduring values of our religion and developing a reverence for our ancient culture. For more information contact Madhavi Vadera on 07980 597 810.

JUNIOR CHYK (TEENAGERS') CLASSES (12-17 yrs)

Junior CHYK classes provide teenagers with an introduction to Vedanta, allowing them to develop a rational and logical approach to religion. Through the company of like-minded peers, they develop a healthy resistance against temptations and learn the tools to excel in all avenues of life. Classes take place in Hendon, Northwood, St John's Wood, Harrow and Edgware. In addition, Junior CHYKs are offered the chance to sit for GCSE Hinduism, taught by our trained sevaks. More information from Madhavi Vadera on 07980 597 810.

DISCOURSES

Weekly discourses are given by our resident Acharya, Brni Sumatiji, at Chinmaya Kirti in Hendon on the following texts: Taittiriya Upanishad, Bhagavad Geeta Chapter 10, Tulsi Ramayana and Dakshinamurti Stotram. With impeccable logic and precision, the essence of these important scriptural texts is explained. Contact Rodney Peel: 07813 610 704 (for Upanishad and Geeta discourses); Aruna Bhalla on 01494 711 917 (for Tulsi Ramayana); and Jaishree Pillai on 020 8578 0800 (for Dakshinamurti Stotram).



SANSKRIT CLASSES

Weekly Sanskrit classes are held for all levels of advancement and are taught by experienced sevaks. These complement our study of the ancient Vedic texts. Please contact Bal-Krishna Patel on 07973 472 042.

MEDITATION

Brni Sumati Chaitanya holds weekly Guided Meditation sessions, teaching us the techniques of meditation in order to bring about an experience of continuous peace both within and without. More information from Steve Fitch on 020 8880 7622.

Details on these and further events will be updated on our website: www.chinmayauk.org

CHANTING AND PUJA, MUSIC AND BHAJANS

The following Pujas, chanting and bhajan sessions take place at Chinmaya Kirti and are conducted by Brni Sumati Chaitanya who, with music and laughter, shows us how to form a relationship with the Lord. The musical classes provide a means to explore, cultivate and improve our creative abilities with the help of qualified musicians:

- Guru Paduka Puja – devotion and prayers at the feet of the Guru. Sapna Khanchandani: 07801 064 296
- Sponsored Hanuman Puja and Hanuman Chalisa. Aruna Bhalla: 01494 711 917
- CHYK Soul (Youth music group). Darpan Patel: 07956 855 017
- Swaranjali (Bhajan session, first Sunday of every month). Darpan Patel: 07956 855 017
- Vedic Chanting from Book of Hymns & Bhagavad Geeta. Smita Samani: 07961 177 106

UPCOMING YAGNAS & CAMPS

SEPTEMBER: Geeta Chapter 18

Swamini Vimalananda visits London in September.

Head of Chinmaya Mission Coimbatore; Director of Chinmaya Vision Program (Education) and Chinmaya International Residential School; author of the bestseller 'In Indian Culture, Why Do We?'

- 7-day discourse. Sunday 16 – Saturday 22 September 2007, 7.30-9.00pm at the Advait Centre, 40 Avenue, Wembley, London.
- 7-day discourse, 24-30 September 2007, in Cardiff
- Course on 'Principles of Meditation and Guided Meditation', Sunday 16 – Saturday 22 September 2007 at Chinmaya Kirti (Attendance only by advance registration. £100).
- Youth conference, Saturday 22 September 2007.
- Sessions for teenagers and children.



APRIL: "Lively Aliveness"

Swami Chidatmananda, Head of Chinmaya Mission Hyderabad and Regional Coordinator of Andhra Pradesh

- 7-day discourse. Sunday 15 – Saturday 21 April 2007, 7.30-9.00 pm daily at Chinmaya Kirti, 2 Egerton Gardens, Hendon Central, London NW4 4BA

Liveliness transforms Thought into Actuality. In liveliness one enjoys every moment of one's work. When the profound Vedantic concepts are practised sincerely one attains Happiness. This happiness spreads and influences everyone and everything to come Alive and live in Peace and Joy.



Detailed information on all our study classes, including timing and venues, available on www.chinmayauk.org. Please visit our e-bookshop on www.chinmayauk.org/ebookshop